



**Labor and Public Employees Committee
Testimony In Support of:**

**SB 1177: An Act Concerning One Fair Wage
HB 6859: An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling
SB 1178: An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days**

March 9, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of SB 1177, HB 6859 and SB 1178. My name is Sara Parker McKernan and I am a Legislative/Policy Advocate for CT's Legal Services Programs, which include New Haven Legal Assistance, Greater Hartford Legal Aid and CT Legal Services. The Legal Services Programs provide free legal services to low income individuals in civil matters, throughout the state. We have been particularly involved in developing policy to support low wage workers and their families.

SB 1177, AAC One Fair Wage

Legal Services' low income clients are often supporting their families through minimum wage jobs or, in the case of many working as tipped servers in the restaurant business, **less than** minimum wage jobs. Relying on tips to make up the difference between the subminimum wage they receive (\$6.38) and the additional \$7.62 they would need to bring their paycheck up to the standard minimum wage, is risky at best. Importantly, these wage discrepancies disproportionately impact servers who are women and workers of color, who are already facing an uneven balance of power in the workforce.

By delinking the subminimum wage from the benefits of the full minimum wage and its periodic indexing, we have placed these workers in a stressful scramble to keep up with growing inflationary expenses and make a living. Not having the guarantee that they will receive even the standard hourly minimum wage, places workers in the position of having to ask for assistance such as SNAP to feed their families, as well as relying on other benefits programs for basic needs and health care.

Our clients often lack the formal education or training to find alternative or higher paying jobs. The low income restaurant workers that are clients of the Legal Services programs, are not working in fine dining establishments but rather in more affordable, family restaurants where tips mirror the lower priced fare that is served. This doesn't equate to the level of work or hours that the server must put in, but rather to the nature of the business that we all enjoy and use.

Additionally, non-table or prep work is part of the job of a server and requires that time be taken away from potentially receiving tips. Although the full minimum wage is required to be paid to servers during non-tip producing intervals, accurate documentation of those non-tip related tasks can be difficult and may result in their compensation not reflecting those wage differences. Complicating this situation is that workers are largely unable to sufficiently enforce these measures through DOL's overburdened wage and hour division, which is charged with wage theft investigations.

HB 6859, AAC Predictable Scheduling

Our low income clients are often living paycheck to paycheck in CT's employment-at-will job market. They may feel lucky to have work but at the same time, powerless to confront their bosses about issues like their schedules. The result is that they are often subject to unpredictable and/or insufficient work schedules that make it difficult to reliably live up to their obligations at home, as both breadwinner and caretaker.

Little notice of shift changes or cancellations mean that they are left with last minute child care dilemmas and transportation issues. With options for child care increasingly limited, workers are often as concerned with losing their child care slot as they are about losing their job or a shift. Not having the ability to control their work schedules leaves workers in the unenviable position of trying to find last minute child care and transportation options in order to fulfill a last minute work request. At the same time, having schedules cut-back or shifts cancelled can result in a paycheck that won't enable them to financially meet their rent, meet those child care expenses or otherwise support their families. The financial security that comes with predictable schedules can make a significant difference in lowering stresses and increasing the level of stability for low income families.

SB 1178, AA Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days

The Legal Services programs strongly support the changes outlined in SB 1178, extending the protections inherent in access to paid sick days, to all workers in all jobs regardless of the size of the employer. Importantly, SB 1178 also expands the definition of family members that can be cared for under a sick leave allotment. It also allows sick leave eligibility without requiring stringent waiting periods and the strict number of hours employed, that are in the current statute. Our clients often hold multiple jobs and may have a hard time meeting current eligibility levels given the part-time nature of their work. Under the proposed language of SB 1178, they will be able to maintain their employment, meet their own health needs and those of their families, and have the flexibility to seek routine medical care. The ability to take time to care for themselves or a sick family member can make a significant difference in a worker's job performance as well as their dedication to their work and employer.